

OUR DUTY

TO THE

FUGITIVE SLAVE:

A Discourse

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY, OCT. 6, IN WEST BOYLSTON, MS.,

AND

IN WORCESTER, DEC. 15.

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DISCOURSE.



Deut. 23 : 15.

**THOU SHALT NOT DELIVER UNTO HIS MASTER THE SERVANT WHICH IS
ESCAPED FROM HIS MASTER UNTO THEE.**

THE recent passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill, will, doubtless, excite in this country opinions the most various and feelings the most conflicting as to our duty to fugitive slaves.

At this early period,* however, the minds of many are probably in an unsettled state, swayed by contrary reasonings, convictions and doubts. Thus, to some extent, it may be with my hearers. But if you wish to have your minds settled correctly, let the "law and the testimony" on this subject be applied. Before your eyes shall be blinded by the dust of political sophistry, and your consciences corrupted by the influence of great names, or the force of public sentiment, be entreated to look into the volume of divine inspiration, to listen to the teachings of your moral nature, and so learn what the will of the Lord is.

The text we have chosen was primarily addressed to God's ancient people. When a servant became restive under bondage and escaped from it, they were commanded not to deliver the fugitive up. No, not for bribes or threats might they do it. Whence he came, or how he came, or when he came, or why he came,—crime excepted,—it mattered not. Were he Jew or Gentile, proselyte or pagan, the command

* The sermon was first delivered only two weeks after the Bill was passed.

applied in each case alike. The master might prove that the fugitive was indeed his servant, might insist that he was "held to service or labor;" but it availed him nothing. He might argue that he had treated the servant justly and kindly, and so claim his delivery. If, however, the servant's flight was not sufficient in all cases to destroy his *argument*, the law of God was sufficient in all cases to destroy his *claim*: it was a law unqualified and positive;—He who gave the law had made no exception, and he who broke it could make no excuse.

But was the servant's neighbor merely to be passive in the controversy? Would the command be fulfilled, if he just let the fugitive and the master alone? If he stood on the ground of sheer neutrality, neither assisting the latter nor assisting the former, would this command hold him guiltless? In so keeping the mere letter of it, would he not violate the whole spirit of it? Most surely. From what is expressed and from what is implied in the passage, then, we have this two-fold proposition,

THAT WHEN ONE WHO HAS ESCAPED FROM BONDAGE COMES TO US, WE ARE NOT TO TAKE THE PART OF THE MASTER, BUT THAT OF THE SLAVE.

Let me attempt to prove the proposition, and then answer some objections. The proof will rather bear on the duty implied than the crime forbidden.

I. Let me prove the proposition,

1. *From the text.* If this text be acknowledged as applicable in relation to fugitives from Southern slavery, it almost ends discussion on the subject. But since its applicability is questioned or denied, let us consider it carefully.

(1.) Taking it for granted that the precept of the text was based on moral grounds, on the danger of the servant's being oppressed, and like reasons, it follows if such a system as existed in ancient Judea, now exists in the South, and one equally oppressive, that fugitives among us have as good claims to sympathy and protection as fugitives among the Jews. All will allow that the modern system is equally liable to oppress its sub-

jects as was the old. If this be so, then why may not Southern servants flee from their masters as well as Jewish? And why should not the precept of the text be as applicable in such circumstances now, as it was three thousand years ago?

(2.) But if it be shown that the servitude of Judea was far less rigorous and oppressive than that of the United States, then it follows that the obligations to fugitives which the text involves, were even less binding upon the Jews than upon us. A mere glance at their system will give abundant proof of its being a far more mild and equitable system than ours.

In the first place, Jewish servants were to have as regular instruction in morals and religion as the children of their masters.*

Again, they were released from regular labor during all the weekly, monthly and yearly solemnities or festivals; and thus they were almost free full one half of the time.

Again, the protection of the law was enjoyed by Jewish servants equally with other members of society. Before civil tribunals they were to be treated as fairly as their masters. "They shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment, thou shalt not respect persons."†

The servant's time, strength and skill, under certain restrictions, were, indeed, to be at another's disposal; but aside from this, there was a broad platform of civil, as well as religious privileges, where the bond and the free stood side by side. Despite his low condition, the highest law recognized the servant as a man, with all the rights and prerogatives of manhood; and in *him* the estate of a servant and the estate of a citizen were combined.

Again, Jewish servants could not be held as property; for they were not subject to its uses nor under its liabilities. The Jews never received them as tribute, never gave them away as presents, nor put them into the hands of others, to be kept in trust, as was the case with other possessions. They were never parted with as hostages or pledges, nor taken in payment for their masters' debts. Money, flocks and herds, and all lost property, was to be restored to their owners; but

* Deut. 31 : 10—13.

† Deut. 16 : 18, 19.

if *servants* escaped, no restoration was to be made. Nor did their masters ever offer them for sale: they might expel them for misconduct, but in no case dispose of them as marketable commodities. If sold at all, for the second time, at least, they must sell themselves.

Again, servants were not to work without remuneration. "Wo unto him that useth his neighbor's service without wages," &c. The word *neighbor* includes not only servants, but enemies even, as shown in the parable of the good Samaritan,—it means any one with whom we come in contact.

Again, and lastly, servants were not subjected to their servitude involuntarily. To take a man and reduce him to bondage contrary to his will, was accounted a crime of fearful magnitude by the law of Moses. The awful sentence God utters against the offender is, "He that stealeth a man, or selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." "This crime is depriving somebody of the ownership of a man. Is that somebody a master? And is the crime that of depriving somebody of a servant? Then it would have read, He that stealeth a *servant*, not 'He that stealeth a *man*.' This somebody, therefore, deprived of the ownership of a man, is the man *himself*. The crime is stated in a three-fold form, man-stealing, selling and holding; and all are whelmed under one penalty,—death." With this very crime were Joseph's brethren chargeable. "I verily was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews," says Joseph. How "stolen?" Stolen by his brethren when they took him by force and sold him into involuntary bondage. Thus if the Jews obeyed the divine requirements, all who became their servants did so of their own free consent, except perhaps in case of captives taken in war.

Such are some of the facts of Hebrew servitude. Who will deny that it was a far more mild and equitable system than that which exists at the South? And if so, are there not far stronger reasons for *our* obeying the precept of the text than for *their* obeying it, to whom it was primarily given? The worse the bondage he escapes, the stronger the fugitive's claims.

(3.) But it may be urged that Christianity has taken the place of Judaism, and that the precept of the text, not having been repeated in the New Testament, is devoid of all authority now.

I reply, in the first place, by saying that according to general belief the Christian system is one breathing far more mercy and compassion than Judaism; that it represents Jehovah more clearly as our universal Father, and labors more directly to link mankind together in one great brotherhood of concord and love. If this be granted, who shall presume to say that the old dispensation, in the precept, made benevolent provisions for the security and comfort of fugitives from slavery, but that the new dispensation makes none? That there is one class of men who have rightly a harder lot under Christ than they had under Moses? That they had a shield thrown over them by the *law*, but that the *gospel* came and wrenched that shield away? That the Jew was bound to take the part of the fugitive instead of the master, but that the Christian is excused,—nay, allowed or bound to do just the reverse? Believe this who can.

Again, there is a class of Old Testament Scriptures which still, as I hold, possess authority, though not placed in the New Testament; and the text belongs to this very class.

True, the splendid ritual of the ancient dispensation, with temple and priest and sacrifice, has passed away. "One greater than the temple" has appeared; he is a "high-priest forever," and "a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood" than Judaism could ever boast. So type gives place to antetype, and shadow yields to substance. Nothing in the Jewish ceremonial is binding now. Nor are the local and civil regulations which God gave to the Jewish people, simply as their national governor, of any force at present, *except* as they involve principles which have a moral character, and which, from their very nature, are permanent and abiding. And it is from a firm conviction that the text involves just such principles, that I present it as being still obligatory. It prohibits virtually certain forms of malevolence or covetousness, and by implication teaches the duty of exercising generosity and

good will to a class of men peculiarly endangered and afflicted. This text, therefore, and its kindred texts, "Hide the outcast; bewray not him that wandereth;" "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee," &c., may be properly ranked with those Old Testament precepts which forbid men to steal, bear false witness or covet; and with those precepts which enjoin kindness to the poor, benevolence to neighbors, love to enemies, and similar duties. Such precepts you find in the Pentateuch, in the Psalms, the Proverbs and the prophets.

So far as the "law and the prophets" treat on such moral obligations, Christ "came not to destroy, but to fulfil" them. "Heaven and earth shall pass" before one jot or tittle of them becomes null and void. All are to be "fulfilled;" to be universally kept and obeyed. In that glorious kingdom which Christ came to set up, the subjects of his spiritual reign are still to be subject to all these moral precepts of the Old Testament. Referring evidently to them, the Saviour says, "Who-soever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, the same shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Moreover Christ and his apostles constantly quote this class of the Jewish Scriptures as being of abiding authority. They never intimate that they give these precepts authority by quoting them; but they quote them as though these precepts had an independent and fixed authority of their own. If this be not so, the language they use and the occasions they take to introduce such quotations, will make it hard to acquit our Redeemer and his followers of the charge of pandering to Jewish prejudices and bartering in sham, spurious pretensions.

Thus much to rescue our text from the frittering of cavillers, and to prove its authority as applying to our own case and to our own times.

Behold it, then, standing beside the moral precepts of the decalogue, towering over that symbolical ritual and civil polity long since laid in ruins! Behold it,—God's olden monument of sympathy with the oppressed! Behold it in its glorious exaltation,—its summit looking down on the clouds of

popular prejudice, its base beyond the reach of the dashing surges of legislation :—

“ Above the storm-mark of the sky,
Above the flood-mark of the deep !”

Never in the days of Israelitish history, *never* in all the ages since this monument was erected, did it loom up more bright and conspicuous in the dark, moral firmament, or challenge more deserved attention and homage than at the present time !

2. We argue the duty of aiding fugitive slaves from the fact that in slavery they suffer great injustice and oppression.

And who denies that those who are greatly oppressed and injured have a right to escape their injurers and oppressors if they can ? And who does not approve of assisting and protecting *such* fugitives if they need it ?

How did we treat the poor, broken-spirited fugitives of Poland, when, after their ineffectual struggles with tyranny, Hope wept her farewells over them, and outraged Freedom,

“ Dropped from her nerveless grasp the shattered spear,
Closed her bright eye and curbed her high career !”

As they quitted that wretched country, spoiled and wasted by their barbarous oppressors, did we not bid them welcome to America, and offer them sympathy and protection ? When the numberless and fierce hussars of the Austrian despot swept like a fiery deluge over the beautiful vallies and the mountain fastnesses of ill-fated Hungary, did we not justify those European powers at whose hands the flying Kossuth and his brave Magyars found succor and protection ? When we saw the Sublime Porte constrained to deny the clamorous demands of Austria, and refusing to deliver the fugitives up, did we not rejoice and exult in the fact ? And when Hungarian patriots, who had bravely but vainly fought for freedom, escaped from the merciless exactions of their victors and the bloody butcheries of Haynau, did we not hail them with the warmest sympathy as they landed on our shores, supply their wants, and assure these self-exiled fugitives, of an asylum permanent and safe from their oppressors ?

Now, in doing thus, we only acted on a principle generally admitted, that when men suffer sheer injustice and oppression, they have a right to escape, if possible, and that it is at once a duty and a privilege to assist and protect them.

Apply this principle in case of fugitives from Southern slavery. Is not the system that enthrals them one of the rankest injustice and oppression? Does it not cleave down all their "inalienable rights!" To steal a man's purse is robbery, acknowledged and punished every where; is it less a robbery to steal the MAN,—to make plunder, not so much of the perishable goods which he owns, as of his personal ownership itself? The command, "Thou shalt not steal," presupposes not only a man's right to property lawfully obtained, but it presupposes a man's right to himself. That great right is the living root and trunk of that tree of which other rights are but the fruits and branches. If it be injustice, then, to pluck one sample of fruit, or cut off one branch of the tree, what injustice is that which tears up the very root and shivers the trunk itself in pieces? If to seize feloniously what is *mine*, be wicked, what a climax of wickedness is that which feloniously seizes *me*? Now it is in this respect that Southern slavery, in its best estate, can only be regarded as a system of the most detestable oppression. Its first and guiltiest act is to cut off man from his personal ownership, his right to himself. Then all its other enormities naturally follow. Having shorn the slave of his manhood, and reduced him to a level with brutes, the system proceeds consistently to make all his dearest interests the playthings of irresponsible power. The master, if he chooses, may keep the slave from infancy to old age in the most utter mental darkness. All his social enjoyments, even those most dear and sacred, the master allows or destroys at pleasure. Does the slave say "*my* parents?" How much are they his, when the next hour the tyrant may sever him from them for life? Does he say "*my* home?" How much his is it, when the master at any moment may burst its door, or level the building with the ground? Does he say "*my* wife, *my* children?" How much *his* are they, when they may at any time be made the

footballs of the master's vengeance, avarice or lust? He may violate their persons, and death impends over them if a hand be lifted in self-defence. When he pleases he may sell them in the market, and separate them one from another. For real or supposed offences, he may imprison, starve or scourge them at will. He may torture them to any extreme within an inch of their lives; and laws, framed by tyrants, will take that tyrant's part.

Now we should conclude, *a priori*, that such a system would lead to all sorts of outrage and crime against the enslaved. There is no system under heaven which presents such temptations and offers such cheap indulgences to the many-sided depravity of man's corrupt heart. And if man is often so violent towards those who are his equals, who have the sympathy of the influential, the protection of law, and the means of self-defence, how must he treat those whom he counts as the basest inferiors, who share no sympathy save that which is powerless, whom the law protects not, and one of whose highest crimes is,—to defend themselves? The presumptions against slavery are of the strongest kind; and these presumptions are abundantly confirmed by facts. The infamous practical workings of slavery at the South, have been detailed to us by our friends who have been there, and thus become familiar with the system. Fugitives have told us of slavery,—the men who have suffered from its cruelties. We have authentic documents, too, in abundance against slavery, full of details one can hardly read without shuddering. Let a man try only to read "American Slavery as It Is," and if he simply peruse the quotations from Southern papers which that volume contains, and the testimonies from present or former residents at the South, he will soon "have supped full of horrors." So shocked and disgusted at the undeniable corruptions and cruelties of the system does the reader speedily become, that he cannot proceed: he closes the book and lays it by. Few persons, probably, ever could endure to read that volume through. And yet what are all the details of slavery we get from friends, or fugitives, or works like the above? What are they but feeble inklings, but fragmentary sketches

of a great, protracted, diabolical conspiracy against the welfare of suffering millions? They are like the popular pictures of Napoleon's great battles, where the encountering squadrons were reckoned by hundreds of thousands, and the dead covered acres with their corpses; but in the pictorial representations you see but a score or two of men in arms, and some half dozen, perhaps, killed or wounded. The artist wrought these few figures just to help us imagine the great aggregate of fighting and carnage and suffering attendant on the fray. So with sketches and incidents we meet with respecting slavery. What we see, what we hear, are but samples of a thousand times more that is unseen and unheard: they aid us a little in conceiving what the myriad masses of the oppressed are every year enduring at the South.

I know that there may here and there be found in New England, a man somewhat intelligent, who insists, after all that has been said or written on the subject, that the temporal condition of Southern slaves is generally a comfortable and pleasant one,—that arbitrary power is a matter of little consequence, if a man's physical wants are well supplied. But I doubt such a man's sincerity. Let him be put to the test. Bring such an apologist up before the dark Bastille of Southern despotism, open the door and tell him he must enter there! Clank the fetters and chains in his ears, and tell him they are for him! Tell him to get ready his neck for the yoke and his wrists for the coflle chains! Tell him he has but an hour to prepare his wife and children for a life of bondage! If he asks particularly how he and they shall *fare* in slavery, tell him, *as well as slaves in general*; and that, since he knows something of their condition, he can calculate his own chances! What says the apologist? Ah, look to his blanched cheeks and his trembling knees! You have him on your side now! You have wrung out even his testimony against slavery as a bitter thing, as an oppressive, inhuman system!

Now it is from such a system that the poor slave who comes among us has escaped. Shall I congratulate or commiserate men who have fled from foreign tyrants, and turn

away from him? Shall I open my heart, my door and my purse, when the outcast Pole and the oppressed Hungarian fly to me for succor, and shut them all up when one of my own countrymen, speaking my own language, and flying from greater Despotism, comes and craves assistance? Such inconsistency may God forbid.

3. Another argument may be founded on the religious intolerance and privations to which slaves are liable. This fact justifies them in coming to us, and justifies us in taking their part. Let us prove this by analogy. Suppose a principality in Europe, under a tyrannical ruler, where all except the officers of government are forbidden to read the Bible, or any volume or tract of a religious kind. None of the citizens are allowed to attend public worship when these officers forbid; and this they often do. No one can give any part of his earnings to benevolent causes, and no one can engage in preaching the gospel, except as the officers say. The officers may forbid parents to give religious instruction to their children, may forbid Christians to have any religious conversation with each other. If, in any of these religious matters the citizens disobey, the officers may punish them in almost any method and to almost any extent they please.

Now if some of the Christians in such a government should fly their country, though forbidden to do so, and come to us, would we not justify them, aid them and protect them, if necessary, from the tyrant's emissaries? Put the State Legislatures of the South, in the place of that tyrant, put slaveholders in place of those government officers, and behold the supposition and the reality made one! Slaves, for the most part, are not allowed to read the Bible, or other religious books; to teach one of them to spell out even the name of Jesus from the word of God, would expose the teacher to fine or imprisonment, and the poor pupil might suffer for his temerity from the scourge or the branding-iron! Slaveholders, too, may forbid their slaves to perform any of the religious duties or enjoy any of the religious privileges specified above; and if they disobey, their masters may punish them just as passion, prejudice or infidelity may prompt.

Why, then, may not men fly from such religious intolerance, or such exposures to it, in America as well as Europe? And after crossing Mason and Dixon's line, how much less are the claims of fugitives upon us, than if they were foreigners who had crossed the Atlantic?

If there be one of you who insists that the slave should meekly and patiently submit to his present religious privations and to his liability to future ones, you will please to be consistent and carry your principles out. If you condemn him, condemn others.

Go stand on the wharf in Trinidad, as the refugees from Madeira are quitting their vessel; and as they rejoice that they are at last delivered from the extortions and cruelties of the papal hierarchy, and as they wave on high their Bibles in holy triumph, tell the poor Portuguese it was wrong in them to leave their native island! Denounce, too, those who bring or send them succor!

Take your place on the rock at Plymouth; and as the Mayflower comes up and drops her anchor in the bay, and the pilgrims disembark, hailing with joy the wild shore that guarantees them

"Freedom to worship God;"

tell them they have greatly erred! Tell them they should have meekly endured religious tyranny, and never left their country!

Follow next the poor French Huguenots, as on the revocation of the edict of Nantes, they flee from intolerance and persecution, and quit their country, though forbidden to do so. Confront these myriad fugitives as they pour into Holland, and level your censures against them! Go to Stadtholder and Burgomasters, too, and denounce them for allowing such fugitives to enter and reside in the United Provinces. Tell them by no means to feed or shelter them. Tell them if Louis XIV send his officers, demanding the return of these refractory subjects, that they must assist in delivering them up!

Nay, go back to the days of the Apostles; and as you meet with Paul flying from Jerusalem, or elsewhere behold other Apostles escaping from Jewish or Gentile persecutors, even

such wise and holy men will be found much in need of your rebukes and instructions!

Nay, the Great Teacher himself must stand corrected by you, and retract that injudicious advice of his, "When they shall persecute you in one city, flee ye to another!"

The truth is, that the whole Christian world, from the time of Christ till now, have held it to be just and right for men suffering from religious intolerance and privation, to make their escape from their oppressors and persecutors if they choose; and if the principle be a correct one, it applies in the case of Southern slaves. They have a right to escape, and we a consequent right to aid and protect them.

4. We may argue the proposition before us from the "Golden Rule," "Do ye unto others as ye would that others should do unto you." To obey this, men must exercise reciprocal justice and benevolence. They must regard the rights of others as sacredly as they would have others regard theirs; and they must exercise to others that sympathy and benevolence which, in like circumstances, they might reasonably claim for themselves.

Apply this rule to the case before us. Imagine yourself on your way to California, crossing the western portion of our continent. Passing through a tribe of hostile, slaveholding Indians,* you are taken captive and reduced, like their negroes, to the most servile condition. You subsequently contract a matrimonial alliance with one of your enslaved countrywomen whom you find there; and children in after years are given you, who are held as slaves the same as their parents.

At length you learn that your master is about to tear some of your children from you; and just before the day of sale, you take your family at midnight and set out for the Mississippi. Worn with travels and fastings, you arrive at a village in Missouri, and seek the door of a Home missionary, to ask food and shelter for yourself and your pale, haggard wife and children. He comes to the door, hears your tale, and re-

* Such are the Seminoles, Cherokees, Choctaws, &c.

plies: "I love to be hospitable; but it seems you are fugitives from slavery. In my belief you wronged your master in running away, for you were his property as much as his dogs and horses; and should I be an auxiliary to your escape, I, too, should be guilty of defrauding him. Was he about to sell your children! that is bad, but you ought to have patiently submitted. Such afflictions are sent for our good. Then, again, you should know that it is contrary to the "Fugitive Slave Bill" to give you any succor or protection in escaping. You must go; I can't aid you; it would be duty rather to aid your master in retaking you!" So he shuts the door in your face, and leaves you and your family faint, hungry and cold, to bide the winter storm and drag on your weary way further. What think you? Would not your head and heart at once and utterly condemn him as one who so poorly understood the law of love, that instead of being a teacher of the heathen, he had "Need that one teach him which be the first principles of the gospel of Christ? You feel, you *know* that such conduct, in such a case, would be most palpably unjust, most infamously cruel.

Now what better rights would you have to protection and hospitality from that missionary, than fugitive slaves coming to the North can urge upon us? Do you say the cases are not parallel? Why? May not an Indian as justly enslave the white man, as the white enslave the negro? Would your children and descendants, born in such a condition, have any better right to liberty than the children and descendants of a once free native of Africa?

"God hath made of one blood all nations to dwell on the face of the whole earth." The slaver that brought the negro here from Africa, had but a robber's right to him. The slaveholder, who bought him, enslaved him and made slaves of his children afterwards, had no right to either but one founded on the slaver's right,—a right which earth and heaven should alike hold in contempt.

Such being the case, the slave who comes to your door, seeking food, shelter or funds for further journeying, is to be regarded as having as good and valid claims for these fa-

vors as you would have in the case before stated. To know how you should treat him, you have indeed only to consider what treatment, in like circumstances, you would claim at the hands of justice and humanity yourself. "Do ye unto others as ye would that others should do unto you."

5. A further proof of our proposition may be drawn from the impulses and tendencies of the moral nature, as manifested in communities educated under moral and religious influences. I appeal not, however, to sentiments immediately derived from fixed theories or habits of virtue, but to the spontaneous promptings of conscience and benevolence,—the law written on the heart. In every virtuous and intelligent community, whose moral feelings have not been sadly perverted by the direct influence of slavery, we almost always find these feelings, when put to the test, opposed to the slaveholder and siding with the fugitive slave. Even where education, literature and legislation have done much to corrupt the minds of men with pro-slavery prejudice, if a fugitive is in danger of being captured, the more benevolent and conscientious in the community will readily become excited in the slave's behalf. Nay, many will be led to sympathize with him in opposition to their former views and sentiments; their moral feelings making them his friends in spite of themselves. How was it, when Somerset, a West India slave, escaped his master in England, that the larger and better portion of the people of Great Britain, from the highlands of Scotland to the mines of Cornwall, became alive with such intensity of sympathy in his behalf? In spite of all the influence of West India slaveholders, their friends and dependants in the master's favor, the cause of the poor man kept gaining ground, till the nation rose in its might, decreed to Somerset his liberty, and pledged the same to every fugitive who should afterwards reach their shores! And now where is the Englishman that does not feel a proud delight in saying,

"Slaves cannot breathe in England; they are free;
They touch our country and their shackles fall"!

And when Latimer, a slave from Virginia, was arrested a few years ago and confined in jail in Boston, and it was feared that he would be legally delivered to his master and taken back to slavery; how was it that the Puritan city was moved with such a deep interest, such an agonizing anxiety in the slave's behalf? How was it that men who had been for years communing with slaveholders, and voting and apologizing for them, turned away with such a common aversion from the master and espoused the fugitive's cause? You remember how prayers on the Sabbath were publicly offered for him in the pulpits; how the press poured out its pleas for him, how the excitement kept spreading till it seemed as if from the sandy shores of Barnstable to the farthest heights of Berkshire, all Massachusetts was moved, and the cry of "God save Latimer," went up on high like the voice of many waters!

Now the moral feelings of the people, as manifested in the case of these two fugitives and of others less noted, contain one of the profoundest arguments to justify slaves in escaping from bondage, and to justify others in aiding them. What are such exhibitions of public sentiment, but the free, full beatings of the great heart of excited humanity,—but vehement expressions of the popular sense of justice, quickened into lively action,—the voice of nature echoing the voice of God?

When men form and express their feelings on cases of conscience or charity, where they are influenced by self-interest and prejudice, and but poorly enlightened, little deference, of course, can be given to their sentiments. But where a community, possessing the largest intelligence, the most thorough biblical education, and the most high-toned morality, become roused in such a controversy on human rights, and in *spite* of self-interest and prejudice, range themselves so spontaneously, so generally on the side of the fugitive, it is not difficult to see which party is with God and which is against him. The decisions of conscience and benevolence, in such cases, are indices of the truth; and they possess but little less authority than revelation itself.

6. My sixth and last proof is founded on the fact, that many fugitives who come among us are our Christian brethren and the brethren and representatives of Jesus Christ. In our own sect there are no less than 50,000 slaves; and some other sects may have as many or more in their membership than ours.

Now suppose that one of these,—a Christian brother, bearing his Master's image, comes to your door and solicits assistance. If you are able to render it, and you refuse him, or if you assist in his restoration to slavery, how much his brother are you? In treating him thus, do you not put the stamp of a canting hypocrisy on all your pretensions to brotherly affection for him? How dare you to treat a brother thus, and still claim to belong to the brotherhood yourself? God's word commands us to "Do good unto all men, especially to such as be of the household of faith:" that we should "be kindly affectioned one toward another," nay, more, that "we should lay down our lives for the brethren." These precepts apply whether these brethren are in freedom or bondage, or flying from the one condition to the other.

But Christian fugitives are not only our brethren, but the brethren and representatives of Christ. In his vivid, dramatic description of the process of the last judgment, he describes himself as welcoming the righteous to his presence with this affecting commendation: "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me." The righteous are surprised at this strange version of their conduct. Few of them had ever seen their Saviour before; and they ask an explanation. He says to them, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." And he charges it upon the wicked, as he condemns them to punishment, that they had refused to relieve his physical wants, and left him in sickness and imprisonment, to suffer unvisited and uncared for. They, too, are surprised, and ask him, "WHEN?" He replies, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye

did it not unto me." O, what thrilling words are these ! How pointedly applicable to the case of the poor fugitive Christian slave ! It is Jesus Christ, in the person of that poor disciple, that appeals to you for aid. Though he be the "least" of all Christ's "brethren," though ignorance degrades and want afflicts him, and though frightful scars may sear his coarse, dark visage, yet is he loved by the Son of God. For that poor wanderer and outcast, he stooped from his glory in heaven to the stable of Bethlehem, and became a poor wanderer and outcast himself. For him he endured the agony of the garden and the execution of the cross. With his own precious blood he has washed away his sins, stamped his own divine name on his heart, and written the slave's name in the book of eternal life ! He is Christ's heir apparent, and joint heir with him to his immense inheritance and eternal throne. So profoundly is Christ, with his infinite love, concerned for him, and so fully identified with him, that he represents that poor disciple in heaven, and makes him his representative on earth. Hence the treatment he receives, Jesus reckons as received by himself. Have you never wished, in your pious sentimentalism, that the Saviour were now on earth, that you might see him and show your love to him by soothing his sorrows and ministering to his wants ? The opportunity has come ! At your own door behold your divine Master, in the person of his hunted, homeless servant, as he begs your pity and assistance ! Oh ! give him food, clothing, shelter, whatever he needs, and do it out of love to Christ. *Such* deeds of compassion and gratitude to the Saviour will be remembered by him and rewarded in the great, burning day ! You will have the same claims upon him with those who did him kind offices when he sojourned among men !

But if you close your door on that poor outcast, outlawed saint, you shut out your Saviour himself. In refusing the craved and needed charity to that forlorn man, you have refused Him who once came to redeem, and who shall soon come again to judge you ! Will you, dare you assist in delivering such a fugitive to his master ? Remember that in selling and betraying him, you have sold and betrayed the

Son of God ! After such an act of treason, you may be prepared, perhaps, like Judas Iscariot, your exemplar, to go out and hang yourself ! Beware, too, lest justice eventually consign you, like him, to your "*own place*," and mercy say of you, "It were good for that man if he had never been born !"

II. We proceed, now, to the second part of the discourse,—To answer some OBJECTIONS against aiding and protecting fugitives from slavery.

1. Some quote, as an objection, 1 Cor. 7:20, 21. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant ? Care not for it ; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." This proves, it is thought, that a converted slave should remain contented in slavery till legally freed. But mark the proposition of Paul in the first sentence ; "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." This must be understood as a literal and absolute rule, or as having some qualifications or conditions. If in the former way, (to suit our objector's views,) it is a sweeping rule surely. It applies, then, alike to all classes ;—it binds the slaveholder to remain a slaveholder as much as the slave to remain a slave ! It binds the soldier to remain a soldier, the priest of idolatry to remain a priest ; and whatever be men's callings or relations, when converted, they must abide in them though their happiness or usefulness demands a change ! The absurdity of such a literal interpretation is at once obvious. The rule must then be understood in a qualified sense. To comport with other Scriptures and with common sense, the passage must simply mean, that when converted, we are to continue in our respective callings or relations, unless we can change without doing injustice, and unless our duty and interest demand the change. Having laid down the general rule, Paul addresses the servant and applies the rule to him. "Art thou called being a servant ? Care not for it." Though converted in servitude, you may maintain your piety ; so do not murmur and repine at your lot. "But if thou mayest be made free," he adds, "use it rather." A better, stricter translation of the original is, "If

"thou art able to become free, rather avail yourself of it," i. e. freedom. That is to say, while Paul counsels the slave to be patient, and preserve his equanimity so long as he remains a slave, he advises him to obtain his freedom if he is able: whether he shall do it by flight or otherwise, he neither affirms or denies, but leaves the question to be settled by the slave himself. There is certainly nothing in the passage forbidding his escape: it rather favors it than otherwise.

2. Another objection against aiding and protecting fugitives, is based on the conduct of Paul in the case of Philemon and his servant, Onesimus. But let us examine Paul's letter, sent by Onesimus to his master. Paul, when he wrote, was at Rome, Philemon in Colosse. While Paul was at the latter city, Philemon was converted through his ministry; and Onesimus having left his master and come to Rome, was converted through Paul's ministry there. Under what circumstances he left Philemon, we do not know, nor do we know the precise character of the relation between them. It appears that they dealt with each other in the way of debt and credit; and that Onesimus had left Philemon with his accounts unsettled, and so perhaps he was his debtor. Moreover Onesimus had been unprofitable to his master, perhaps, by his idleness and unfaithfulness.

Onesimus, when converted, evidently felt unhappy in view of his misconduct towards Philemon, anxious to be in his employ again and to labor for him with more fidelity. That he will do so, Paul intimates in his letter. Furthermore, to soothe Philemon's mind and to prevent all difficulty, Paul tells Philemon if Onesimus owed him any thing, to place the sum to the Apostle's account.

Having thus prepared Philemon's mind for it, Paul urges a request or demand on Philemon, viz., that he should receive Onesimus. But in what way? "Not now as a servant, but above a servant." How much above? He was to receive him as the "son" of the Apostle,—as "a brother beloved," says Paul,—"as myself." He must manifest the utmost cordiality to Onesimus, the warmest affection and esteem.

But may he not own him and enslave him, as to his *bodily* powers, while he regards him as a brother and equal *spiritually*? Chattelize him as a *man* and befriend him as a *Christian*? No; Paul, as if to prevent any such misconstruction of his requests, states explicitly that Onesimus is to be received as "above a servant, *both in the flesh and in the Lord.*"

What is this, in fact, but requiring Philemon to receive Onesimus into his employ as a *freeman*, and to treat him as such in all respects and circumstances? In this letter Paul does not blame Onesimus for running away, but for what he did before that. There is no proof in the letter against the supposition that he went back of his own choice, and that Paul wrote the letter at the suggestion of Onesimus himself. What argument, then, does this letter furnish either against Southern slaves' escaping from their oppressors, or our assisting and protecting them? None at all.

3. But it is objected again, that thus to take the part of the fugitive slave, is contrary to the laws framed by our rulers, which we are enjoined by God's word to obey.

It is, I grant, contrary to law; and I acknowledge that we are commanded to "Submit ourselves to the powers that be," "to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates." But the highest reason and the clearest revelation alike teach us a most important limitation to these precepts. They do not apply where the authority of God and the authority of men conflict. Governments may even make foolish laws and oppressive laws; but we are bound to fulfil them to the very letter in all cases where we can do so without violating conscience, or disobeying the Most High. But if God command one thing and civil rulers command the opposite, what *then*? Must his word give place to theirs? If so, then Parliaments and Congresses may easily nullify all the statutes of the Bible, till God is legislated out of his supremacy, his sceptre wrested, his throne overturned, and he himself becomes the outlaw of the universe!

Unless God's authority be every where and forever paramount to that of earthly rulers, what does his word, what does his very *existence* signify? I say it with reverence, if

God be indeed *such* a God, we might as well have no God at all! If our rulers be indeed *such* rulers, vested with supreme authority, why longer give homage and adoration to their INFERIOR? Let us abjure the God who made us and worship these greater gods of our own making!

It is indeed a tossing chaos of moral distinctions, a black abyss of atheism into which these modern teachers of "passive obedience" would plunge us.

In what delightful contrast with such a theory, are those descriptions of the Deity, those examples of holy men, found in Scripture, which this subject calls to remembrance! God is described by the sacred writers, as "The only potentate," as the "King of kings," as "God over all blessed forever." And thus was he recognized by those ancient saints revelation holds up to us as models for our imitation.

When the king of Babylon set up a golden image and commanded the assembled multitude of his subjects to fall down and worship, on pain of being cast into the fiery furnace if they refused, there were three brave Hebrews who scorned and trampled on his mandate. The king commanded idolatrous worship; God had positively forbidden it. One or the other must be disobeyed; and they decide to disobey the king. God approves their conduct, and works a miracle in its vindication. The form of the Fourth is with them in the furnace, and they come out without the scent of fire on their garments!

Called on as we now are to fall down and worship this idol of slavery, this Juggernaut of the American nation, let us, like them, be firm and unflinching. And the unchanging God, who approved their fidelity, will approve ours.

The example of Daniel is equally in point. When the enemies of the prime minister, for the secret purpose of securing his destruction, had induced Darius to sign a decree that no one should offer a petition during thirty days to any god or man save the king, what does Daniel do?

The law emanates from the highest authority in the empire: it cannot be repealed; and it is guarded by one of the most terrible sanctions a sovereign can inflict or a subject fear.

Will not these facts justify him, for so brief a period, in suspending his daily worship? Surely in such a case, if ever, a man might be justified in obeying a civil law at the expense of disobeying God's. But Daniel will not, cannot. But will he not strike a compromise between duty and interest, and so perform his devotions secretly? Not he;—he will not honor a wicked law either by real or apparent obedience. So he enters his chamber, and before his opened window, where all may see and hear him, he kneels down and worships God three times a day, "as he did aforetime." You know the sequel. He was cast into the lion's den; but that God whom he had honored by breaking an ungodly law, sent an angel to protect him. By the miracle wrought in his behalf, Darius plainly saw that God himself had attested the righteousness of the prophet's conduct. He sets Daniel at large, dooms his enemies to destruction, and proclaims to all his dominions the majesty and supreme authority of Daniel's God. How worthy is his example, therefore, to be copied by us!

A similar instance is seen in the case of the Apostles, Peter and John. When commanded by the Sanhedrim not to speak in the name of Jesus, they reply, "Whether it is right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Peter and John go from their presence to that of the other Apostles and their fellow Christians, and make their report. The subject is discussed, united prayer is offered; and they resolve to disobey the rulers and keep on promulgating the gospel. Then was the Spirit poured out, miracles wrought, and converts reckoned by thousands. Judaism trembles in her ancient seat for her safety; again the Apostles are arrested, condemned and imprisoned. But an angel opens their dungeon; and they, entering the temple, commence preaching as before. Being seized the third time and brought before the council, the exasperated high priest exclaims against them, "Did we not straitly command you that ye should not preach in this name, and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrines, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Hear their brief, but ever memorable reply:—"We ought to obey

God rather than man !” Such has every where been the language of confessors and martyrs,—worthies of whom this world was never worthy. O how easy it is, in the light of such examples, to see what course we ought to take when men enjoin what God prohibits or prohibit what God enjoins !

4. It is objected that if we aid fugitive slaves, and prevent their delivery, that we violate our national Constitution, by which the people of the several States have solemnly agreed to abide.

Now admitting, for argument’s sake, that there is one article in that document which may be so interpreted, such article or such interpretation ought to be treated as null and void. If our forefathers, who framed the Constitution, made any agreement to deliver such fugitives to the slave-catchers, they engaged to do wrong ; and engaging to do wrong, cannot make the doing of it right. To pledge injustice without committing it, is wicked ; to do both is more wicked still. If our forefathers have made any covenant with slaveholders against the welfare of the oppressed, we may say of it, as of other bad promises, that “it is better broken than kept.” Such a covenant should be to us “As one of the steps of Jacob’s ladder, and treading it under our feet, it should help us in mounting up to heaven.”

5. It is objected that if we pursue such a course, it will lead to a dissolution of the Union, to great sufferings on the part of the slaves, and probably to civil war. I am not certain of all this ; but I am certain that each of us is bound to “do justly and love mercy,” though it breaks the union of soul and body itself. If the South will secede from the Union, unless we of the North will sacrifice both humanity and Christianity, why let them secede and have the guilt and the gain of it. Then if they are led to oppress their slaves more grievously, or go to war with us because we aid and protect such as escape them, we shall not be chargeable with their sins, though we deplore and endure the results. The course pursued by Christ and his Apostles, and by the great reformers of gone-by ages, led to bloody persecutions, to political dis-

cords and convulsions; but God approved their course, and if we walk in their footsteps he will approve ours. The calamities that ensue, will only call down his displeasure on those who in their disappointed and maddened selfishness are the voluntary agents and authors of them.

But it is vain to attempt to settle the question of duty to the fugitive slave, by reckoning on future events.

The knowledge of our duty God has given us; the knowledge of the future he has not. And since he who commands us, foreknows and controls all things, it is our business to obey, and it is God's to calculate. For the consequences of our obedience we are not responsible; God is responsible himself.

CONCLUSION.

In concluding and applying this discourse, permit some pointed and practical reflections.

1. I hold in my hand a bill which has just passed both houses of Congress and is now the law of the land. It is evidently designed as a peace-offering to the excited, slaveholding South. The victims laid on the altar are to be the slaves that have escaped to the free North. The bill provides for the appointment of United States' officers to assist slave-hunters in capturing the fugitives and taking them back to bondage. Warrants for their arrest must be served by the United States' marshals, under penalty of one thousand dollars if these marshals refuse! They are empowered, when they please, to call on bystanders to aid them in their business of slave-catching, and "all good citizens" are enjoined by Congress to lend assistance when it is wanted! Though the slave be brought before United States' Commissioners or Courts, he is to have his destiny determined in a "*summary manner*,"—cut off from the right of trial by jury, the benefit of the writ of *habeas corpus*, or the privilege of testifying in his own behalf! And, then, if any one harbor or secrete a fugi-

tive, or aid him to escape his master, he is to be fined a sum not over a thousand dollars and be imprisoned six months! In case the assistance rendered to the slave enables him to get beyond his master's reach, THE ONE WHO SO ASSISTS HIM MUST PAY HIS OWNER, AS DAMAGES, ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS MORE!

Merciful God! has it come to this? Can it be possible in the middle of the nineteenth century, in a land boasting of liberty, in a national assembly which conceives itself unrivalled for intelligence and moral principle, that such iniquity should have been framed into law,—a law trampling on the weak and helpless, and blackening Christian virtues into civil crimes!

And now do you ask, "What shall we do?" Whether you will obey Congress, or obey Jehovah, whether you shall truckle to the avarice and lust of Southern tyrants, or act the part of justice and mercy to the oppressed, you must decide for yourselves, and stand or fall with your decision. For my own part, I am already decided what course to take: and I stand prepared to meet the consequences in the judgment. I abjure this bill altogether,—now and forever! Unprincipled men may go to Congress, to fatten on the spoils of office, to play their games for the Presidency, to sell their principles in the shambles for party or plunder,—if they will! They may write over a document like this, full of libels on the Bible and outrages on humanity and treason against heaven; they may call it *law*, and send it to me signed with all authority, but God forbid that I should plunge myself into the deep damnation of obeying it! No; I shall not abide by this bill; but I shall violate it on every occasion, and in every way that a Christian can.

Let a fugitive come to this place, and though he be shut out of other doors, he will find free entrance into mine. I will feed him, clothe him, shelter him, secrete him, or, if need be, help him on his way to that land, close by us, where he can have the whole power of the mightiest and best of empires to protect him.

Had I but one meal, one loaf in my house, the hungry fugitive should share it with me; had I but one dollar in my purse, he should have a part of it. Do you say that in so doing I bid defiance to high authority, and that fines and imprisonments impend over me? Very well! I understand it; let them *come*! God helping, I can bide the issue. Let magistrates impose the fine; I will pay it if I am able. Let them send me to prison; I will endure the confinement. But as soon as I come out, I will succor and protect the first poor fugitive I meet with, and then be fined and imprisoned again. Then, as the dungeon is opened and I am set free, they will find me in the same business as soon as I find it to do; and so on to the chapter's end! Martyrdom in such a cause would be an honor a man might almost aspire to.

But to help capture the fugitive, and deliver him to his master! Why, I would as readily commit burglary, or highway robbery. Let me die, let me go to the stake sooner than be party to the slave-hunter's guilt. Giving such a man aid, would be the same to me as selling my soul to Satan.

And I counsel you, my hearers, as you revere God's authority, as you hate oppression, as you pity the oppressed, as you love Christ and those who love him, as you desire God's favor, as you hope to be saved, to make a similar decision, to go and do likewise! If a poor outcast comes to your door seeking sustenance, secretion, or money for further journeying, turn him not away! Do your duty, and trust God with the result.

I cannot doubt that you will. I know of your opinions on this subject, for since I saw this bill I have had no time to consult them. But in your earnest, impetuous, tearful looks this morning, I read your sentiments, I see your holy resolves. But am I deceived? Can it be possible that one of the members of my church should aid in the delivery of a poor victim of oppression? May you be safe in heaven first! How much I should prefer to follow one of you, my Christian friends, to the grave with your memory unstained and your soul untarnished, than to have you live to commit such an outrage on a fellow-man, such treason against God!

2. But you have something more to do than to disobey this bill. Providence may give you no occasion for that. But speak against it; write against it, pray against it, vote against it. Use all your social, religious and political power for its overthrow. Whatever influence you can wield in heaven or on earth for this object, wield it, I pray you, till this odious and insulting law is repealed.

3. I have not spoken in this discourse as a political partisan. So little have I followed, of late, the doubling track of pro-slavery politicians, so little do I know at this early date of the means or the men by whom this bill was passed, that I cannot say which party, or what particular statesmen are most in fault. Like that figure of Justice, which surmounts some of our court-houses, with her eyes bandaged, the scales in one hand and the sword in the other, so have I come before you this morning. I shall only know what party the scales have weighed and found wanting; I shall only know what necks the sword has severed, when the balance is turned, the sword sheathed, and the bandage taken from my eyes. Whoever they be who have helped to pass this bill, may God in mercy forgive them, and cast their counsels headlong.

4. Though we may well be amazed, indignant and horror-stricken at the wickedness of this bill; yet we ought not, as the friends of the oppressed, to be discouraged. If I mistake not, we have reason to rejoice. The selfishness of the slave power has overshot the mark. It has dug the grave for its own interment, and, Haman-like, reared the gallows for its own execution. The bill, as it goes abroad, will swell the flames of anti-slavery excitement. Slaveholders have tried to put out that fire before, by pouring on oil and alcohol; now they would smother it with gunpowder! Let them see the result. Men that never cared for slavery before, will feel that they have now

"Enough to stir a fever in the blood of age,
And make the infant's sinews strong as steel."

In every legislature, in every court and college and debating room and public house, on every rail-car and steam-boat, in thousands of reviews and news-prints, aye, and in many a pulpit too, this bill of infamy will be discussed, and the hatred of slavery and pity for the slave be deepened. Thus, I trust, will the numbers and energy of the hosts of liberty be augmented, carry their triumphs into Congress, and march on from conquest to conquest,

“Till o’er our land, from sea to sea,

• One voice shall thunder, we are free!”